

Message Text

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ACTION EA-10

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NSAE-00 RSC-01 SIL-01 DODE-00 PM-03 H-01 L-02 NSC-05

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SEOUL 6995

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: ELAB, PINS, PINT, KS

SUBJECT: TRADE UNION CONVENTION ERRUPTS

REF: SEOUL 6931

1. UNUSUALLY STORMY ANNUAL CONVENTION OF FEDERATION OF KOREAN TRADE UNIONS (FKTU) OCTOBER 17-18 CAME TO INCONCLUSIVE END. KCIA AND OFFICE OF LABOR AFFAIRS (OLA) EFFORTS TO CONTROL CONVENTION PROCEEDINGS BY BRIBES AND THREATS WERE EXPOSED ON CONVENTION FLOOR AND FAILED TO PREVENT CHALLENGE OF INCUMBENT LEADERSHIP, ALTHOUGH ACTUAL LEADERSHIP CHANGE WAS TEMPORARILY POSTPONED.

2. MINXERS' VICE PRESIDENT PANG HONG KYU AND EX-FKTU PRESIDENT KIM MAL YONG SPOKE FOR OPPOSITION. DEFYING KCIA THREATS AND OPENLY CHALLENGED FKTU LEADERSHIP, ESPECIALLY PRESIDENT PAE SANG HO AS CORRUPT AGENT OF ROKG AND NOT REPRESENTATIVE OF WORKERS' INTEREST. THEY WERE FOLLOWED BY CHAIRMAN OF SEOUL CHAPTER OF RAILWAY WORKERS WHO EXPOSED KCIA THREATS AND BLANDISHMENTS.

3. DURING DEBATE FISTFIGHTS BROKE OUT ON FLOOR AND GROUP OF DELEGATES THREATENED TO STORM OUT OF RAILWAY WORKERS' HALL NEAR
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SEOUL RAILROAD STATION TO DEMONSTRATE, BUT WERE CONTAINED

BY REPORTED 100 RIOT POLICEMEN.

4. AT OPENING CEREMONY IT BECAME CLEAR THAT ROKG HAD FAILED TO PERSUADE UNION LEADERS TO AVOID LEADERSHIP FIGHT WHEN PRESIDENT PAE DEVIATED FROM PREPARED TEXT TO ADMIT FAULTS IN HIS ADMINISTRATION AND LEADERSHIP OF FKTU, AND TO ANNOUNCE THAT HE AND FELLOW LEADERS WOULD RESIGN IF CONVENTION SO DEMANDED.

5. FOLLOWING WARNING BY OLA DIRECTOR GENERAL CHAE TU-YOL TO CONVENTION THAT NO PROTESTS, STRIKES, OR UNREASONABLE LABOR DEMANDS WOULD BE TOLERATED FROM UNIONS, DELEGATES WERE TIED UP IN PROCEDURAL FIGHT OVER ACCREDITATION IN ORDER TO AVOID NO-CONFIDENCE VOTE. AFTER THIS MANEUVER FAILED AND SEVERAL TACTICAL ADJOURNMENTS TO WORK OUT COMPROMISE, PRESIDENT PAE AGREED TO ANNOUNCE TO DELEGATES THAT HE WOULD CONVENE WITHIN THREE MONTHS NEW CONVENTION TO ENABLE DELEGATES TO VOTE ON LEADERSHIP CHANGE. IN RETURN CONVENTION DELEGATES ABANDONED ACCREDITATION FIGHT AND ACCEPTED ACTIVITIES REPORT AND RESOLUTIONS.

6. RESOLUTIONS CALLED ON ROKG TO ABOLISH PROHIBITION OF STRIKES, DEMANDED MORE EFFECTIVE POLICING OF LABOR LAWS AND MEASURES AGAINST BOTH GROWING UNEMPLOYMENT AND DROP IN WORKERS' EARNINGS. U.S. FORCES IN KOREA CAME ALSO UNDER ATTACK FOR "INADEQUATE" WAGE OFFER, AND FKTU BACKED FOREIGN ORGANIZATION EMPLOYEES' UNION'S STRIKE THREAT AGAINST U.S. ARMED FORCES.

7. COMMENT: THIS IS FIRST TIME IN RECENT HISTORY OLA AND KCIA HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO STAGEMANAGE PROCEEDINGS. UNUSUAL MILITANCY REFLECTS GROWING FRUSTRATION OF UNION LEADERS IN PRESENT ECONOMIC SITUATION, AND THEIR GROWING WILLINGNESS TO TAKE PERSONAL RISKS IN DEFYING ROKG. OLA OFFICIALS TOLD EMBASSY THAT KCIA MAY FOLLOW THROUGH WITH ITS THREATS TO ARREST OPPOSITION LABOR LEADERS. ACTUAL HOLDING OF PROMISED EXTRAORDINARY CONVENTION WILL DEPEND ON GOVERNMENT READING OF POLITICAL CLIMATE. OLA AND KCIA NOW FEEL THAT THEY HAVE GAINED THREE MONTHS RESPITE. IF GENERAL SITUATION REMAINS TENSE BY YEAR END SPECIAL CONVENTION COULD BE DELAYED INDEFINITELY.
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